

# Autism Action Plan 2019-2022

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[https://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publications/pdf/autism\\_action\\_plan\\_2019-22.pdf](https://www.health.gov.nl.ca/health/publications/pdf/autism_action_plan_2019-22.pdf)

# Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Autism is a life-long condition that affects how individuals relate to people, situations and their environment
- ASD is considered a spectrum as the individual impact varies from person to person
- Approximately 1 in 57 individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador are living with ASD, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada
- This is the highest prevalence rate in the country

# Consultations

- Individuals living with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), family members, community agencies, health professionals, educators, municipalities, and leading researchers
- Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Premier's Task Force for Improved Educational Outcomes/Education Action Plan
- All Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions/Towards Recovery

# Autism Action Council

- Individuals with lived experience
- Self-advocates
- Autism Society of NL
- Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Community Living
- Health and education professionals
- Departments: Health and Community Services; Education and Early Childhood Development; Children, Seniors and Social Development; Justice and Public Safety; and Advanced Education, Skills and Labour

# The Plan

Three year plan with 46 actions across six focus areas.

- Short-term: 19 actions will be substantially completed in year one (by March 2020)
- Medium-term: 22 actions will be substantially completed in year two (by March 2021)
- Long-term: 5 actions will be substantially completed in year three (by March 2022)

# 1. AWARENESS, ACCEPTANCE, DIAGNOSIS & ASSESSMENT

- Focus on improving public awareness to increase understanding and acceptance, and lead to earlier diagnosis
- More diagnostic clinics for children and adults, more supportive counselling for families
- Reduced wait times for assessment, diagnosis and for speech language pathology and occupational therapy

# 1. AWARENESS, ACCEPTANCE, DIAGNOSIS & ASSESSMENT

- Critical information toolkit for individuals and families upon diagnosis
- Better data collection to accurately measure needs and identify gaps
- New assessment tools and reports will better match services to strengths and needs

## 2. SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS LIVING WITH ASD

- Two new programs will be created to ensure seamless supports across the life span:
  - Provincial Autism Services Program for children and youth up to age 21; and
  - The Supporting Abilities Program for adults.
- The Special Child Welfare Allowance Program will be replaced with a Supportive Services for Children Program

## 2. SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS LIVING WITH ASD

- Elimination of IQ 70 as an eligibility criteria for community supports
- Criteria will be based on functional need for supports, not diagnosis
- Supportive education for parents and caregivers of children and youth
- Individualized person-centered support plans co-developed by individuals, parents and caregivers, educational, and health professionals

### 3. EVIDENCE BASED TREATMENT & MANAGEMENT OF ASD: RIGHT SERVICE, RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

- Wraparound support - JASPER for children up to age nine and Applied Behaviour Analysis for children and youth up to age 21 provided at home, in community, in early years programs and in school
- Cognitive behavioural therapy and other evidence-based interventions for children and adults living with ASD and experiencing mental health concerns

### **3. EVIDENCE BASED TREATMENT & MANAGEMENT OF ASD: RIGHT SERVICE, RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME**

- Actions aimed at increasing positive and proactive interventions with individuals living with ASD whether in a residential setting, in the community or within the justice system
- Improved understanding and implementation of ASD specific approaches can ensure a personalized approach across all these settings

# 4. EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH LIVING WITH ASD

- ASD specific interventions to support literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional learning
- More assistive technology to support communication needs
- Peer mediated techniques to support social inclusion and improved social skills
- ASD-specific training for early years professionals and teachers

# 5. LIVING WITH ASD IN THE COMMUNITY

- Improved access to appropriate training programs, social enterprise and youth employment programs
- Improved transitions out of school and into the world of work and post-secondary
- More life skills networking groups and leisure activities
- Increased opportunities for social enterprise and entrepreneurship

# 5. LIVING WITH ASD IN THE COMMUNITY

- More residential and other supported living options for individuals with significant complex needs
- Increased ASD-specific accessibility initiatives
- Improved support planning with a focus on quality of life indicators

# 6. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN ASD

- Clinical training in evidence-based practices for ASD for all professionals working with and supporting individuals living with ASD
- Access to ASD-specific awareness sessions for post-secondary students in health, education and social sectors
- A network for professionals providing support to individuals living with ASD to share information across jurisdictions on provincial initiatives and evidence-based research

# Accountability

- An evaluation plan will be developed by the Department of Health and Community Services, in consultation with the Autism Action Council, and will form the basis of annual progress reports on the delivery of the Autism Action Plan
- A formal evaluation will occur after year two to ensure actions are achieved in accordance with the implementation timelines identified

# Outcomes

## Individual Impact

- Children and Youth: Earlier diagnosis, better assessments and more therapy options, wrapped around the child or youth
- Adult: Improved transitions out of school to post secondary and work and more opportunities for independent living

## Support System Impact

- Parents/caregivers will be offered supportive education and counselling
- Professionals offered training and education in treatment and supports
- Community will have autism friendly environments, and more partnership opportunities